

## The Authentication of the Apostles (5:12–16)

**ACTS 5:12** Once again **the apostles** were used by God to perform **many miraculous signs and wonders** (cf. comments on 2:43). Interestingly the regular meeting place of the early Jerusalem church was in the temple at **Solomon’s Colonnade**, where people gathered after they had heard of the lame man’s healing (3:11).

**ACTS 5:13** This verse probably means that no hypocrite or unbeliever **dared joined them**. The case of Ananias and Sapphira frightened them too much!

The words **no one else** are literally, “none of the rest” (*tōn loipōn oudeis*). The words “the rest” are used of the lost (trans. “others” in Luke 8:10; cf. Rom. 11:7; Eph. 2:3; 1 Thes. 4:13; 5:6).

**ACTS 5:14** In spite of the reluctance of the unsaved to join the group of believers, **more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number**. Rapid numerical growth was a phenomenon of the early church (cf. 2:41, 47; 4:4; 6:1, 7; 9:31).

**ACTS 5:15–16** Miraculous signs (cf. v. 12) confirmed the Word of God in the midst of the young church. This shows God’s sovereign sanction of the church, following His discipline of it. Many **people** revealed not only their confidence in the apostles to heal, but also their superstition. They thought it was **Peter’s shadow** itself which fell **on the sick** that would heal **them**.

The apostles’ divinely given power to heal and to exorcise demons accords with the Lord’s promise to them (Matt. 10:8; Mark 16:17–18).

## The Second Detention and Release of the Apostles (5:17–20)

5:17–20. After this second apprehension and incarceration of **the apostles**—apparently all 12 of them—God supernaturally released them and commanded them by means of **an angel** to continue the public proclamation (**in the temple courts**, near the church’s gathering place; cf. v. 12) of **the full message of this new life** (lit., “all the words of this life,” an unusual way to refer to the gospel). In Acts this is the first of three miraculous jail miracles (cf. Peter, 12:6–10; Paul and Silas, 16:26–27).

## The Examination and Defense of the Apostles (5:21–32)

**ACTS 5:21a**. The obedience of the apostles to the angel’s directive (v. 20) is evident. Though their sleep was abbreviated the preceding night, **at daybreak they entered the temple courts** (cf. v. 20).

**ACTS 5:21b–25** The facts recorded in these verses are filled with irony: (1) **The guards** were carefully keeping empty **jail cells** secured (vv. 21b–23). (2) The highest powers **of Israel** were gathered to judge prisoners they did not have. (3) While the frenzied leaders were deliberating as to what had happened to **the men** who had been in their custody, they were told the apostles were preaching in the **courts** of the **temple**. **The captain of the temple guard and the chief priests** (cf. 4:1) **were puzzled** (*diēporoun*, lit., “were perplexed,” or “were at a loss”) as to how to explain the **locked** but empty cells. Perhaps they also wondered **what would come of** them for losing their prisoners! (Cf. 16:27–28.)

**ACTS 5:26–27** The captain and the jail officers carefully recaptured the apostles (without using force, for fear of arousing the anger of the populace) and brought the apostles ... before the Sanhedrin for questioning.

**ACTS 5:28** Use of the pronoun **this** twice underscores the high priest's reluctance to pronounce the name of Jesus (cf. "this name," 4:17). Obviously his hatred of Christ Jesus was great!

**ACTS 5:29** Here Peter reiterated a basic principle already affirmed in 4:19–20. The converse is also true: Christians are to **obey** their governments unless it is a sin to do so (cf. Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17).

**ACTS 5:30–31** This response by Peter and the apostles about Jesus' resurrection must have infuriated the Sadducees (cf. 4:1–2; 5:17; 23:8). Yet it was the same message Peter, once again the apostles' spokesman, had preached before: (a) they had **killed** Jesus, but **God ... raised Him from the dead** (cf. 2:23–24, 36; 3:15; 4:10); (b) they could have **forgiveness of sins** (cf. 2:38; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18) by turning to Him in **repentance** (cf. 2:38; 3:16; 4:12; 8:22).

**ACTS 5:32** The apostles were well aware of their responsibility for they asserted, **We are witnesses of these things** (*rhēmatōn*, "words, sayings," or "things"). Furthermore, **the Holy Spirit** was corroborating their testimony by supernaturally enabling them to preach with boldness and to perform miracles. This same Spirit is **given to** all who believe in Christ (Rom. 8:9).

### **The Liberation of The Apostles (5:33–42)**

**ACTS 5:33** The fury of the leaders toward the apostles could have been expected. The leaders **wanted to put them to death**. Their opposition followed the same pattern as their hostility to the Lord a few weeks earlier. Characteristically opposition grows, and so it did here.

**ACTS 5:34–35** The venerated **Gamaliel**, a **Pharisee** and **teacher**, influenced **the Sanhedrin** not to oppose the apostles. He spoke not from sympathy for the church, but from insight into God's sovereign working on earth (cf. v. 39).

**ACTS 5:36** Nothing is known of this **Theudas** with his **400** insurrectionists, whose cause came to naught. Though Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century, described a rebellion led by a Theudas, that insurrection was later and much larger. Furthermore, that rebellion *followed* the one led by the Judas described in verse 37.

**ACTS 5:37** The insurrection led by **Judas the Galilean** was Gamaliel's second illustration. Josephus gave a rather full account of this movement which led to the execution of Judas, but also spawned further rebellion.

**ACTS 5:38–39** Here is the conclusion and main thrust of Gamaliel's speech. Seeing what would come of this movement would tell them if it were **of human origin** or **from God**. Interestingly this speech was, in one sense, an apologetic for the church of Jesus Christ given by a representative of the church's enemies: to try to stop God's work would be like **fighting against God!**

**ACTS 5:40** Not considering it adequate simply to admonish **the apostles**, the council **had them flogged** and **ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus**. The flogging was evidently punishment for the apostles' disobedience to their earlier prohibition (cf. 4:18, 21; 5:28).

**ACTS 5:41–42** In spite of the bloody beating, **the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing**. Here again the theme of joy is evident in the Book of Acts. A victorious church rejoices in God's working in spite of persecution—and even on account of it, as here. The apostles were honored to be **suffering disgrace for the name**. Later, Peter encouraged Christians to "rejoice" when they would "participate" in sufferings on behalf of Christ (1 Peter 4:13; cf. 1 Peter 2:18–21; 3:8–17).

Luke's object in writing Acts 5:17–42 was to show how Israel as a nation was continuing down its tragic path of rejecting **Jesus** as its Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 365–367.